



PRESS RELEASE

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UN Committee calls upon the Slovak government for more consistent protection of economic and social rights of people in Slovakia

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights called upon the Slovak government to adopt multiple specific measures to improve the production of human rights in Slovakia. It published the proposed measures after its October session and discussion with Slovak government delegation in Geneva. Many of them concern protection of Roma minority rights specifically.

The proposed measures are a response to a broad range of problems, that are present in Slovakia and negatively impact the protection of economic, social and cultural rights of its inhabitants. The Committee paid special attention to the situation of disadvantaged groups of people, that are in general targeted with increased level of human rights violations. The Committee expressed its concerns, among others in this regard, that **Slovak courts do not sufficiently protect rights of persons that are commonly exposed to discrimination** – such as members of Roma minority, migrants, or people with disabilities. It recommended the government to remove barriers that are preventing the victims of discrimination from effectively seek protection from discrimination before courts.

Many recommendations that the Committee addressed to the government, are concerned with protection of disadvantaged members of Roma community specifically. The Committee expressed, among others, concerns about **ongoing segregation of Roma children in education**, including their large numbers in special schools and classes. In this regard, it specifically pointed out the persistent and deeply entrenched prejudices and stigmatisation, that Roma children face and which are, according to the Committee, the core problem of their exclusion in education and Slovak society as such. According to the Committee, the government must take immediate steps to secure integration of Roma children into mainstream education. It also emphasised that the government must cooperate with local administration to solve the problem of social exclusion of Roma children.

The Committee paid extensive attention also to the question of **violating reproductive rights of women, while noting the situation of Roma women in particular**. In this regard, it was deeply concerned with documented information about segregation of Roma women in maternity wards, their harassment, degradation or physical restraint during childbirth. It paid attention also to **access to justice for Roma women that were sterilised without their informed consent in the past**. It urged the government in this regard to provide appropriate and effective remedies for all aggrieved women.

The Committee also expressed deep concern about the situation where **large amounts of Roma, especially in segregated communities, are still left without stable access to clean water**. In this regard, it recommended the Slovak government to take all necessary steps to secure appropriate and secure water for all.

“I spoke mainly about situation in the municipality, where I live myself, during the session of the Committee. I pointed out that some Roma families do not have access to water and many children in the local school are educated in segregated classrooms. I pointed out some other areas, where Roma in Slovakia are facing discrimination as well. I would like to urge our government to finally pay attention

to these problems,” said Roma women activist from eastern Slovakia, who participated at the session of the UN Committee.

“It is evident from the recommendations of the Committee that institutions in Slovakia must perform significantly more than today to protect rights of socially excluded Roma in Slovakia. The measures taken by the government in the last years, are simply not enough. Poverty and social exclusion of many Roma in marginalized communities, segregation of Roma children in education, or violation of reproductive rights of women are persisting problems that need to be solved swiftly,” said Štefan Ivanco, program coordinator of Center for Civil and Human Rights said.

“Similarly, we consider it essential that the UN Committee again noted the problem with unavailability and unaccessibility of water. It is recognized that every human has right to water and it is task of the state to secure realization of this right. In this regard the public administration unfortunately fails and it is necessary to rethink more significant measures,” said Maroš Matiaško, chair of Forum for Human Rights adds.

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) is a UN body consisting of independent experts, overseeing the implementation of legally binding international treaty – International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – by its state parties. The Committee assessed implementation of the Covenant by Slovakia in its session with the Slovak government delegation from 9 to 10 October in Geneva. It happened for the first time after more than seven years. The session was preceded by the submission of a periodic report from the Slovak government, in which it described the measures for protection of human rights in the recent years and the achieved progress in this area.

Non-governmental organizations Center for Civil and Human Rights (Center) and Forum for Human Rights (Forum) participated in the session and **provided the Committee with information about current situation of human rights protection in Slovakia.** In their reports and in person, they informed the Committee mainly about violation of right of Roma in access to water, segregation of Roma children in education a violation of reproductive rights of Roma women.

THE END

Concluding observation of the Committee with an overview of recommendations:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2fC.12%2fSVK%2fCO%2f3&Lang=en

Alternative report of the Center provided for the Committee:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCESCR%2fCSS%2fSVK%2f37061&Lang=en

Alternative report of the Forum provided for the Committee:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCESCR%2fCSS%2fSVK%2f35669&Lang=en

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Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradna) is a non-governmental organisation focused on the protection of human rights of minorities protection from discrimination. It pays long-term attention especially to questions of discrimination of Roma ethnic group in various areas of life in Slovakia. It also deals with the protection of reproductive rights, The Center in its work develops method of strategic litigation in cases of discrimination and human rights violations of minorities. It also carries out field monitoring, advocacy activities towards state institutions and educational activities in the area of protection from discrimination. Web: www.poradna-prava.sk

Forum for Human Rights is a non-governmental organisation concerned with enforcement of human rights through legal means. It pays attention especially to the issue of poverty and social rights, exclusion of various groups, including Roma ethnic minority and people with disabilities, ill-treatment and discrimination. Forum lawyers are representing cases before national and international courts and bodies and regularly participate in sessions of international human rights bodies. Web: www.forumhr.eu